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CHINA AND UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN AFRICA

Lieutenant Colonel Philippe D. Rogers, U.S. Marine Corps

China comes to Africa in the 21st century with not only a need for natural resources but also with the financial resources and political influence to pursue its objectives vigorously. China has altered the strategic context in Africa.

ANTHONY LAKE, *MORE THAN HUMANITARIANISM*

In February 2007, President Hu Jintao of the People's Republic of China completed a much-publicized visit to Africa. The trip fulfilled a promise made at an Africa-China summit in Beijing in November 2006, where forty-eight African heads of state heard him pledge to double aid to Africa by 2009 and create an investment fund of five billion dollars over the next three years. This 2007 tour—which included Cameroon, Liberia, Sudan, Zambia, Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique, and the Seychelles—was the third such high-visibility visit to Africa President Hu has made since 2000, and it reflects China's growing interest and influence in that continent.[1]

Indeed, China has developed for Africa a comprehensive strategy reflecting its own wide-ranging economic, diplomatic, political, and military engagement there. Beijing's burgeoning presence in Africa has been fueled by a combination of its own economic growth, its need for resources, more sophisticated leadership, better scholarship on Africa, and a domestic public more confident in China as a global actor.[2] Additionally, China has notably enhanced its international standing with a dramatic increase in participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions from Haiti to East Timor, and as part of this larger engagement it has become a significant contributor to UN peacekeeping missions in Africa. This peacekeeping presence represents just one, but nevertheless

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important, facet of growing Chinese influence in Africa, which needs to be understood and appreciated by American policy makers.

CHINA'S RISING INFLUENCE IN AFRICA

China's pervasive influence in Africa is manifest not only in its burgeoning economic trade with the continent, forecast to surpass $100 billion by 2010, but in its energy strategy, its diplomatic presence, its cultural exchanges, and its growing military presence and security cooperation.[3] Over seven hundred Chinese companies operate in forty-nine African countries, in markets ranging from textiles to fishing to extractive industries.[4] It has established seven regional trade and investment centers throughout Africa to seek new economic and infrastructure-development opportunities.[5] China, currently the world's second-largest net importer of oil, imports from Africa 25 percent of its oil (forecast to increase to 40 percent within the next decade).[6] Not only President Hu but other top Chinese leaders have visited Africa extensively since 2000, and Chinese diplomatic representation to African regional organizations is growing exponentially. China has sharply increased its foreign aid and floated multibillion-dollar loans, at low or no interest, to a variety of countries. It has aggressively promoted cultural and educational exchanges involving Chinese universities and tens of thousands of African students. It has also increased its military presence in Africa, selling small arms and fighter aircraft to several nations, increasing its number of military advisers, and building small-arms factories in Sudan and other countries.

At the November 2006 China-Africa Economic Forum, hosted by Beijing and attended by forty-eight African nations, President Hu promised that China would double economic aid to the continent by 2009, increase trade and infrastructure development, train fifteen thousand African professionals, provide scholarships to four thousand African students, and develop increasingly closer ties over the succeeding decade.[7] This forum and China's actions with respect to Africa send a loud and clear message—that China has seized the initiative in Africa, altering the continent's strategic landscape.

China has used what it calls an "independent foreign policy" (a term by which Beijing connotes independence from American power) to achieve its considerable influence in Africa, seeking diplomatic, military, and economic influence in exchange for unconditional foreign aid, whatever the human rights record or political practices of countries that benefit.[8] However advantageous it is for Beijing, this foreign policy undermines U.S. and international promotion of good governance, market reform, and regional security and stability while concomitantly diminishing the influence of the United States and other countries in Africa. China's relationships with Angola and Zimbabwe, for instance, have

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enabled these countries to ignore international pressure and have frustrated efforts to isolate, coerce, or reform them.

China's strong influence in Africa and what it might portend for the international community is underscored by its relationship with Sudan. Sudan's internal conflict has been roiling for decades. A seemingly intractable domestic conflict with age-old roots has become a full-scale "ethnic cleansing."[9] The international community, collectively sworn not to allow another Rwanda-type massacre, is finding a solution elusive. Worsening the situation is China's refusal to yield to international pressure and condemn Sudanese actions, insisting on Sudan's right to govern its own internal affairs irrespective of the ongoing genocide. The disturbing reality is that China is heavily invested in Sudan, whence 20 percent of its African oil comes and where Chinese oil firms are deeply entrenched. Over ten thousand Chinese workers live and work in the Sudan.[10] Instead of using its considerable influence in Sudan to work for a solution, Beijing has cast a blind eye on Sudanese inaction and complicity—all but endorsing its actions. Chinese refusal to address the situation appropriately is the primary reason for the watered-down character of UN resolutions with respect to Sudan.[11]

Against this contextual background of China's influence in Africa, let us now explore Chinese involvement in UN peacekeeping missions in the continent. After a short history of China's contributions to UN peacekeeping missions in general, this article examines its perspectives on peacekeeping and its involvement in peacekeeping missions in Africa (with particular focus, based on first-person accounts, on the peacekeeping mission in the Western Sahara). It closes with an examination of the significance of Chinese contributions to peacekeeping in Africa.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

The People's Republic of China (PRC) officially joined the UN and became a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 1971. Peacekeeping missions have been authorized by the UN since 1948, but China initially chose not to participate in them. China's reluctance to contribute to UN peacekeeping missions was primarily driven by its belief that the sovereignty of nations gave them an inherent right to control their own internal affairs without third-party interference—an issue that had been vital to the early survival of the PRC itself.[12]

In 1989, however, China began its first exploratory foray into UN peacekeeping missions, sending nonmilitary observers to join the UN Namibia Transitional Period Aid Group overseeing a general election. In 1990, China dispatched military observers to the Middle East in support of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). It was this act that marked the beginning of its official participation in UN peacekeeping operations.[13] Over the ensuing decade and a

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half, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) became increasingly involved with peacekeeping, sending more than 6,500 peacekeepers to thirteen UN missions in Burundi, Cambodia, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, East Timor, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, and Sudan.[14]

Today, China sends more peacekeepers to more UN missions than any other permanent member of the UNSC besides France—in fact, China was only recently surpassed by France's commitment of forces to Lebanon in August 2006. As of January 2007, over 1,861 Chinese military and civilian personnel were deployed to twelve UN missions; this number is expected to climb in the near future as China sends additional peacekeepers into Lebanon and Sudan. In comparison, France has 2,049 personnel in ten missions, the United Kingdom 360 in eight missions, the United States 316 in eight missions, and Russia 298 in thirteen. Of the 114 nations now contributing 81,992 personnel to sixteen peacekeeping missions worldwide, China ranks twelfth overall (France tenth, the United Kingdom fortieth, the United States forty-third, and Russia forty-fourth).[15] In fairness to other UNSC permanent members, China's dues represent only 3 percent of the UN budget (the American share is 22 percent); nonetheless, Beijing's willingness to support UN peacekeeping missions with personnel—a low-density/high-demand commodity—paints China as a "responsible stakeholder" on the international stage.[16] China's readiness as a permanent Security Council member to contribute large numbers of people also lends important credibility to the very missions the council approves, funds, and supports.

China, then, has certainly made up for a slow start in peacekeeping involvement. It has contributed not only United Nations military observers (UNMOs) but engineer battalions, police units, medical teams, and transportation companies as well. In fact, it has committed itself to providing permanently "one UN standard engineering battalion, one UN standard medical team, and two UN standard transportation companies to ongoing missions"—essentially establishing its own designated expeditionary niche.[17]

Chinese UNMOs are usually officers, selected or volunteering from a variety of specialties and backgrounds.[18] Staffs in the Beijing area are often drawn upon for intelligence, logistics, infantry, and personnel officers to fill these positions.[19] Tours normally last eight months to one year before units or personnel are relieved and replaced by follow-on units or personnel.

The Chinese engineer battalions dedicated to UN missions normally deploy as units, sometimes with reinforcement or augmentation. They frequently come from the engineer brigade stationed at Nankou, Northwest Beijing, in the Beijing Military Region. Other regions augment the engineer battalions as necessary.[20] The Nankou brigade, being in a constant state of training and

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preparedness for peacekeeping, with units either deployed or preparing to deploy, and because of its familiarity with and repeated experience of such operations, has issued a UNMO handbook, *Logistics Support for Peacekeeping Forces.*[21]

Chinese civilian policemen are sent to the Chinese Peacekeeping Civil Police Training Center, in Langfang, Hebei Province, fifty kilometers southeast of Beijing, the largest such center in Asia. The training center is run by the People's Armed Police (PAP); however, there have been no PAP deployments as such in support of peacekeeping operations.[22] Prospective civilian police normally receive advanced peacekeeping training in thirty-one courses in the months before deploying. Training includes anti-riot procedures, searching techniques, protection of very important persons, combat techniques, psychology skills, physical agility, driving, and vehicle maintenance.[23] Training is also conducted at a base in Nanjing in Jiangsu Province.[24] Chinese police units, medical teams, and transportation companies deploying to UN peacekeeping missions are drawn from various military regions. Units of these types have deployed to missions alone and in combination.[25]

Since 2000, China has supported numerous missions on many different continents, sending UNMOs, police units, and troops to every clime and place. Of note, in 2004 China sent a 125-man police company to Haiti—the first time a complete Chinese police unit had been sent to a Western Hemisphere mission. China has seven staff officers serving in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the UN Headquarters in New York City. Nine Chinese peacekeepers have died during UN missions to date. Chinese participation in UN peacekeeping missions as of January 2007 is represented in the table.

CHINESE PERSPECTIVES ON UN PEACEKEEPING

China has clearly established itself as a credible UN peacekeeping contributor, reversing an earlier policy of nonparticipation. What brought this sea change about?

One of the main roots of the dramatic upswing in Chinese peacekeeping can be traced to the PLA actions in Tiananmen Square in June 1989. The events of Tiananmen damaged ties that had developed between the PLA and the people of China since the revolution in 1949. The People's Liberation Army determined that it needed to restore a congenial relationship with the broader society and the world. The actions it chose included disaster relief, domestic security, and other measures, but also, very importantly, participation in UN peacekeeping operations.[26]

China's attitudinal change with respect to UN peacekeeping was eventually captured in a white paper, *China's National Defense in 2004.* Chapter 9, "International Security Cooperation," in a section entitled "Participation in UN

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CHINESE PARTICIPATION IN UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS (as of January 2007)

MINURSO (UN Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara)
14 military observers
MINUSTAH (UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti)
129 civilian police
MONUC (UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo [DROC])
218 troops and 12 military observers (total 230)
UNIFIL (UN International Force in Lebanon)
392 troops
UNIOSIL (United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone)
1 military observer
UNMEE (UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea)
7 military observers
UNMIK (UN Mission in Kosovo)
18 military observers
UNMIL (UN Mission in Liberia)
565 troops, 18 civilian police, 5 military observers (total 588)
UNMIS (UN Mission in Sudan)
446 troops, 9 civilian police, 14 military observers (total 469)
UNMIT (UN Mission in Timor Leste [East Timor])
2 military observers
UNOCI (UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire)
7 military observers
UNTSO (UN Truce Supervision Organization)
4 military observers
Total 1,861

Source: United Nations Peacekeeping, "Contributors."

Peacekeeping Operations," specifically lays out the new position on peacekeeping missions:

> China has consistently supported and actively participated in the peacekeeping operations that are consistent with the spirit of the UN Charter. It maintains that the UN peacekeeping operations should abide by the purposes and principles of the UN charter and other universally recognized principles governing peacekeeping operations. China will continue to support the reform of the UN peacekeeping missions, hoping to strengthen further the UN capability in preserving peace.[27]

This section is unique among other permanent members' national defense strategies. No others specifically list involvement in UN peacekeeping missions and or classify them under "theater security cooperation," an important distinction.[28]

The importance that China now gives peacekeeping is emphasized as well in *China's Foreign Affairs,* an annual foreign-affairs compendium compiled by the Policy Planning section of the Foreign Ministry to promulgate and explain the

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government's foreign policy and affairs. The document asserts that "UN peacekeeping operations are an important means developed over many years of UN practice for the maintenance of international peace and security" and that "always valuing and supporting PKO [peacekeeping operations] consistent with the UN Charter, China has gradually expanded its involvement in these endeavors and thus projected an image of a peace-loving and responsible major country."[29]

In support of this fundamental foreign policy change, the Chinese media has portrayed PLA and civilian police participation in UN peacekeeping missions positively. Further, the media devotes a great deal of attention to peacekeeping troops, since they are the only forces deployed externally. These missions are an opportunity to place China in a favorable light domestically and internationally, which is important to the PLA and its role in society.[30]

Likewise, the populace follows the exploits of its peacekeepers closely. The cremated ashes of a Chinese peacekeeper, Lieutenant Colonel Du Zhaoyu, who died during an Israeli air raid on Lebanon in 2006, were interred at the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing. President Hu Jintao; the vice chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), Guo Boxiong; the CMC's vice chairman, Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan; Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing; and Liang Guanglie, chief of the General Staff of the PLA, all presented wreaths and paid personal respects. Du's body was covered with the flag of the Communist Party of China and surrounded by white roses and cypress leaves. Hundreds of people, including Du's colleagues, schoolmates, teachers, and neighbors, attended the service.[31] This story, like many other touching ones like it, seems to have strengthened the bond between the people and the PLA.[32]

CHINA AND UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN AFRICA

China's participation in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa (1,316 personnel) outweighs its total contributions elsewhere (545), a reflection of its keen interest in peacekeeping efforts in Africa. Beijing has also stated to the UN that enhancing regional peacekeeping capacity in Africa in order to meet ongoing challenges to security and stability is a Chinese priority.[33]

Furthermore, China's African Policy, as defined by *China's African Policy: A White Paper,* specifically addresses a desire for "enhancing solidarity and cooperation with African countries" as part of "an important component of China's independent foreign policy of peace," promising that China will "continue to appeal to the international community to give more attention to questions concerning peace and development in Africa." *China's African Policy* specifically mentions UN peacekeeping as one of its security cooperation tools, as does the defense white paper: China, it declares, "will urge the UN Security Council to pay attention to and help resolve regional conflicts in Africa" and "will continue

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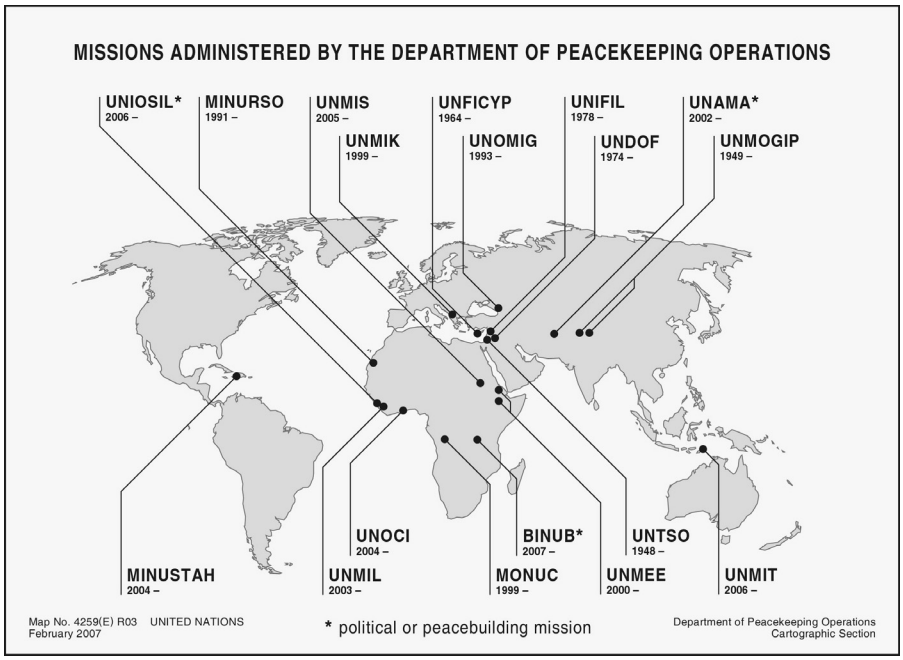
its support to and participation in UN peacekeeping operations in Africa" as part of "Enhancing All-Round Cooperation between China and Africa."[34]

China is currently involved in all seven UN missions in Africa: in the Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), Liberia (UNMIL), Sudan (UNMIS), Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), and the Western Sahara (MINURSO, discussed at length below). The Chinese have also been involved in past missions in Namibia in 1989–90 (UNTAG), Mozambique in 1993–94 (ONUMOZ), Liberia in 1993–97 (UNOMIL), Burundi in 2004 (ONUB), and both past Sierra Leone missions, in 1998–99 (UNOMSIL) and 1999–2005 (UNAMSIL).[35]



Courtesy UN Dept. of Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section

The seven Chinese UN military observers in the UNOCI mission (Côte d'Ivoire) form part of a larger force comprising over 8,990 uniformed personnel. UNOCI is charged with monitoring the cessation of hostilities and movements of armed groups and with the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, repatriation, and resettlement of military personnel and militias.[36]

In MONUC (Democratic Republic of the Congo [DROC]), 230 Chinese troops and UNMOs serve among 18,410 uniformed personnel deploying and maintaining a presence in the key areas of potential volatility in order "to promote the reestablishment of confidence; discourage violence, by deterring the use of force to threaten the political process; and allow United Nations personnel to operate freely, particularly in the Eastern part of DROC."[37] The Chinese

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have several times rotated (for eight-month tours) troops and UNMOs to this mission, including engineer companies of 175 personnel and medical platoons of forty personnel.[38]

In UNMEE (Eritrea and Ethiopia), seven Chinese UNMOs serve with 2,280 military personnel monitoring the cessation of hostilities and helping ensure observance of the security commitments agreed between the two countries.[39]

In UNMIL (Liberia), the Chinese contingent of 593 troops is part of a mission of 15,200 military personnel observing the implementation of a cease-fire agreement, investigating violations and maintaining liaison among all Liberian military forces.[40] Past Chinese deployments to Liberia have been very successful. For instance, the 1st PLA Construction Engineer Company from Shenyang Military Region, a medical team from the Nanjing Military Region, and a transportation team from the General Logistics Department deployed in 2003–2004. The construction company, actually a reserve water-supply unit, underwent a three-month buildup and training period in preparation. These units built a 1,200-kilometer road, four camps, two parking aprons, and twenty-one bridges, and leveled off over seventy thousand square meters of ground. The medical team treated over 2,300 outpatients, hospitalized over 250 people, and operated on fifty. The transportation team moved over thirty thousand tons of material and over seventy thousand people.[41] Chinese peacekeepers are now in their fourth tour to Liberia; in all, China has sent over 2,243 to that country.[42]

In UNMIS (Sudan), 469 Chinese serve as part of a mission of 9,980 supporting implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed by warring parties.[43] Laiyang, in Shandong Province, sent a 275-man engineer detachment, a hundred-person transportation detachment, and a sixty-man medical detachment in 2005. Their principal missions were to construct roads, bridges, and airports; provide water and power supplies; and transport personnel and water.[44] There is a large Chinese presence in Sudan, and it is not uncommon to see signs in Chinese along with Arabic and English.

In UNIOSIL (Sierra Leone), one Chinese UN military observer serves in a 278-person mission mandated to help the government of Sierra Leone consolidate peace, strengthen democracy, and sustain development.[45]

CHINESE PEACEKEEPERS IN THE WESTERN SAHARA (MINURSO)

The following commentary is based on the experiences of three American UN military observers (including the author) who have served with Chinese peacekeepers in the Western Sahara. The three were attached to MINURSO for six-month deployments between 1998 and 2001.

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The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara

MINURSO was established by Security Council Resolution 690 of 29 April 1991, in accordance with "the settlement proposals for la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro." As agreed by the belligerents—Morocco and the Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO)—the implementation plan provided for a transitional period during which a special representative of the United Nations secretary-general would have sole and exclusive responsibility over all matters relating to a referendum in which the people of the Western Sahara would choose between independence and integration with Morocco. The Special Representative would be assisted in his tasks by an integrated group of UN civilian, military, and police personnel, to be known as the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara.[46]

The current military force is headed by a two-star general officer; as of January 2007 over twenty-five nations were represented. Fourteen Chinese UNMOs serve in a contingent of 215 military personnel (twenty-eight troops, four police, 183 unarmed military observers), along with 101 international civilian personnel, 138 local civilian staff, and twenty-three United Nations volunteers to the mission. The UNMOs are distributed among nine sites east and west of the dividing line between the belligerents, a liaison office in Tindouf (Algeria), a staging area in Dakhla, and the UN headquarters in Laayoune. The team sites' areas of responsibility range in size from twelve thousand to forty-seven thousand square kilometers. A team site's UNMOs carry out an average of eighteen patrols each week (some of them at night), each team site covering a minimum of two thousand square kilometers. Approximately thirty-five UN helicopter reconnaissance flights are conducted each month in the areas of responsibility.[47]

Since 1991, MINURSO has been effectively monitoring the cease-fire. UNMOs patrol both sides of the dividing line and the demilitarized zone that cuts across the Western Sahara, verifying compliance with military agreements signed by both parties to the conflict. They monitor entry into the zone and such activities as tactical reinforcement, redeployment of troops, infrastructure improvement, or other matters requiring prior approval. Military observers have the right to visit the belligerents' units and conduct patrols at any time.[48]

The Military South Sector Commander: The Chinese Colonel

The military mission in 2000 was co-led by the French and Chinese, who contributed the largest numbers of UNMOs (twenty-one each). The operation is split into North and South sectors for span-of-control purposes. The North Sector was led by a French colonel, who had approximately ninety-four UNMOs at five team sites. The South Sector was led by a Chinese colonel in charge of the same number of UNMOs and sites. These sector commanders had challenging

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Courtesy UN Dept. of Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section

jobs: they were personally responsible for all their UNMOs and operational considerations in their sectors. Their responsibilities included all logistics, medical care, aviation, and UN team sites and equipment, as well as the complaints and infractions of the treaty parties. Threats to their forces included the possibility of hostile acts by treaty parties, extreme weather (sandstorms, 150-degree heat, etc.), and millions of mines laid during the Western Sahara conflict.[49]

The Southern Sector commander was based at Oum Dreyga (see map). The Chinese colonel in 2000 was an extremely intelligent and capable officer who spoke fluent English. He was very comfortable in his operational environment

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despite its challenges and handled all aspects of the mission smoothly. He was very safety conscious, insisting especially upon driving safety—car accidents were the number-one source of injuries and death for the mission.[50]

The Chinese UN Military Observers

The twenty-one Chinese peacekeepers in 2001 were capable, proficient, dedicated, intelligent, and professional. Like any other country's UNMOs, the individual Chinese officers' capabilities varied with personal experiences, intelligence, personality, and communication skills.[51]

Operationally, the Chinese observers were sound. Most spoke English (the official MINURSO language) well enough to accomplish the mission, though some did so with only limited ability. A few were fluent not only in English but in French, Russian, and other languages as well. Language facility was important when it came time to assign billets and leadership positions; also, those who spoke English well were assigned the rewarding jobs (e.g., team site commander, deputy team site commander, operations officer, information officer). Chinese UNMOs filled each of these positions at one team site or another. Of note, the Chinese were sometimes used by sector commanders to pass information in their own language over open radio nets so the belligerents would be unable to intercept it; Spanish, French, Arabic, and Russian were in common use by the Moroccans and the POLISARIO.[52]

The Chinese officers were tactically proficient, displaying a solid grasp of expected skills: navigation, information gathering, communication, and basic military knowledge, among others. Again, these skills varied between individuals, but most officers were technically capable. For instance, as the Smara team site commander in the North Sector from July 2000 to January 2001, I appointed a Chinese officer as my operations officer due to his UNMO skills. He was a very sharp major from the logistics field who spoke English very well and had fine interpersonal skills. When I left the mission he assumed command of the Smara team site and by all accounts performed well.[53]

No particular "niche" capabilities or skills made the Chinese collectively stand out from the rest of the MINURSO observers, but they did have one noticeable and universal weakness—poor driving skills. China's vehicle population at that time was small; also, presumably, officers from the big cities would not have needed to drive in China, and if they did, trained military drivers would usually have been available. Whether for these or other reasons, however, the Chinese officers were not car owners, by and large, and they had a particularly difficult time (though they were not the only ones) handling the MINURSO four-by-four, standard-transmission vehicles in desert conditions. The Chinese officers had evidently been put through a quick course in driving and maintenance, but

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this did not replace a lifetime of driving experience. The driving conditions in the Sahara were brutal, and the vehicles, although modified to meet the harsh terrain, were not indestructible.[54]

As a matter of pride, the Chinese would not admit to their poor driving skills but to a man resolutely tried to improve. Many took up the offer of additional driving instruction from American UNMOs, and the latter were impressed with their motivation. One U.S. officer successfully taught a Chinese UNMO the difficult mission of backing up the team's pickup truck with the site trash trailer hitched behind; the Chinese officer insisted on being the "permanent trash driver" for the rest of the mission.[55]

Chinese Military Observer Personalities

As one would expect with any country, the personalities of the Chinese UNMOs varied greatly. One American UNMO's experiences with two Chinese officers (a captain and a major) with whom he served in 1997 at a team site on the POLISARIO side captures this observation. Both of the Chinese officers spoke English well, and both were terrible drivers (though they thought the opposite). Here their similarities ended. The captain, an infantry officer, was very approachable and genuinely liked by all team-site members. He had an outgoing personality, a great sense of humor, a genuine interest in everyone at the site, and was without question a team player. He was reliable, worked hard, and never caused disputes.

The major was a bit different. He was not introverted or reserved, but neither was he as amiable a character as the Chinese captain, and he befriended no one, even the captain. He was very opinionated and did not mind prodding his fellow UNMOs. According to the American observer, he deliberately antagonized the Russians by insisting that communism was flourishing in China, that it had failed in Russia, and that now Russia was failing with its new system as well. True diplomats, the Russians wrote off the remarks, but they were convinced this officer was not a real major in the Chinese army. They were certain he was a political agent, like a Soviet-era KGB *rezident.* They were quick to point out that the Chinese captain not only never argued with the major but kept his distance from him.

In terms of reliability, punctuality, and work ethic, the major was everything he should have been, but his personality was perhaps not well suited for a UN mission. For instance, he once almost got the team site in serious trouble on patrol by his tendency to pontificate on the merits of communism. On this occasion he and two other UNMOs on patrol visited a POLISARIO logistical unit commander and his small staff, all Muslims. Over tea and small talk, the major started on communism and all its aspects; before long he was declaring that religion is just a manifestation of mankind's collective imagination, manipulated by

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the capitalists and adhered to by only the less intelligent. This quickly drew glares from the POLISARIO soldiers, who were astounded if not shocked. The major, realizing his faux pas, abruptly ceased, and the UNMOs hastily concluded the meeting.[56]

Specialty, Rank, Money, and Time Off

UNMOs, regardless of nationality, are led to believe that the UN military observers of other nations are intelligence officers expressly sent for intelligence (or in UN parlance, information) collection. Whether this perception is true or not is irrelevant; the belief is engrained in all UNMOs. In the end, everyone perceives everyone else as an intelligence collector or intelligence officer.

The Chinese were naturally inquisitive and curious about Americans, and in light of that perception it was difficult to tell if their questions were purely for curiosity's sake and thus benign or were truly aimed at developing profiles on American (and other) officers. I believe the case was a little bit of both. The Chinese questions sometimes ventured into technical and military realms, but cultural and linguistic differences meant that it was never clear if they wanted us to divulge secrets. In any case, there was not much strategic value to be gained from U.S. military observers who categorically assumed the Chinese to be either political or intelligence officers. However, the Chinese may very well have been what they claimed to be—infantry, engineer, or logistics officers, or whatever specialties they professed.[57]

Another pervasive belief is that other countries' militaries send senior officers to UN missions but reduce them in rank for the mission, either to fill assigned rank quotas or to allow senior officers to take part (there are only so many colonel leadership billets in each mission). Although I met officers from other countries who admitted to voluntary demotions, it was not clear whether the Chinese used this practice. Most American UNMOs assumed the Chinese were of higher rank than advertised.[58]

All UN member states are legally obligated to pay their shares of peacekeeping costs under an established formula. The top ten providers of assessed contributions to UN peacekeeping operations were (as of January 2006) the United States, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Canada, Spain, China, and the Netherlands.[59]

Troops serving in UN peacekeeping operations are paid by their own governments, according to their own national ranks and salary scales. The UN offers payments, at standard rates approved by the General Assembly, to compensate for pay and allowances of all troops and as supplements for specialists (that is, within infantry and logistics contingents and formed police units). In addition, contributing countries are reimbursed for the wear to clothing, gear and

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equipment, and personal weaponry. The current rates per peacekeeper per month are $1,028 for pay and allowances; $303 supplementary pay for specialists; $68 for personal clothing, gear, and equipment; and five dollars for personal weaponry. Countries volunteering military contingents and formed police units are reimbursed by the UN for transport to and from the mission and for wear and tear to (and replacement if necessary of) "organic" equipment. Countries are either reimbursed directly or arrangements are made to transport, equip, or sustain their troops on a case-by-case basis.[60]

The Chinese UNMOs would each have received, tax free, eighty dollars (U.S.) a day in cash, paid at the end of each month during the mission. This was the same rate paid to all UNMOs in the mission. For a Chinese officer this represented a significant additional income.[61]

All UNMOs on UN missions work every day, with no time off. However, the UN uses a "compensatory time off" system to award days off for accumulated workdays—that is, for every five days worked, the UNMO earns one day of compensatory time off. Once an UNMO has accumulated approximately twelve days off, he can, through prearrangement, schedule some "liberty" somewhere in the MINURSO area of responsibility (Laayoune, Morocco, or the Canary Islands). It was common for nationalities to schedule compensatory time off together in one of these locations. The Chinese UNMOs had a favorite destination in Morocco, a town called Agadir. Evidently Agadir is home to a large Chinese fishing community; eight to ten Chinese officers would head north to Agadir to enjoy a week of Chinese food, fun, and fellowship.[62]

A Final Word on MINURSO

Perhaps the most endearing part of the mission for any officer in the Western Sahara was the sharing with fellow UNMOs of national-day festivities, such as the Fourth of July. Invariably this led to each nation's taking its turn trying to outshine others with elaborately prepared national feasts, songs, and toasts. The patriotic fervor of the Chinese was no less fierce than any American's, and their national day was a great event followed by a wonderful feast.

One year, when the team was gathered at the UN headquarters in Laayoune to celebrate China's national day, this patriotism was particularly evident. The Chinese national contingent gathered to sing its national anthem and to raise its flag in the headquarters square. As the national song played and all stood at attention, the flag was unfurled and duly hoisted—upside down. The nervous Chinese officer who had unwittingly committed the error fainted in formation. His fellow countrymen and others stifled smiles. One thing was made clear—all UN military observers are the same, no matter what uniform they wear.[63]

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CHINESE PEACEKEEPING IN AFRICA: WHY DOES IT MATTER?

China's recent rapid increase in UN peacekeeping missions and its willingness to expand its participation in them speaks volumes to how it views their importance. The Chinese have performed well, and their strict discipline and high efficiency have earned accolades, but what does China gain from this experience at different levels?[64]

The Strategic Value to China of Peacekeeping in Africa

China's recent UN peacekeeping track record reinforces its role as a responsible stakeholder in the international community and gives it more global influence. This influence is parlayed into prestige and clout, both of which are attractive in the eyes of African countries, especially those inclined to search for alternatives to partnerships of the kinds traditionally offered by Western nations. That point, coupled with an overarching Chinese strategic approach to Africa that features "an independent foreign policy," $1.8 billion in African aid to date with no apparent strings attached, and diplomatic, economic, and military ties with 90 percent of Africa (unshadowed by any colonial history on that continent), make it unsurprising that it is quietly but steadily building a significant presence there.[65]

The influence China gains from African nation support in international fora is important to its "One China" policy; to its energy future, commerce, and military-industrial complex; and to the advancement of its international agenda. This mutually beneficial relationship is reinforced, in turn, by China's participation in UN peacekeeping missions—which it considers, as we have seen, a form of security cooperation. The more China advocates and participates in UN peacekeeping missions, the more influence it creates with regional organizations (e.g., the African Union) formulating Africa's future.

China has or is developing strong ties with the African nations to which it deploys UN peacekeepers. This may be coincidental, but Beijing's disproportionately large contribution to African missions suggests otherwise. As demonstrated, China has a vested interest in the strategic security and stability of the African continent, and long-term involvement in peacekeeping missions there should be expected.

The Operational Value to China of Peacekeeping in Africa

Having little power-projection capability and a policy not focused on overseas deployment at the present time, for China UN peacekeeping operations represent one of the most important ways it can gain distant operational experience. With these deployments, the Chinese gain exposure to the operational practices and methods of foreign military forces as well. There are also benefits gained in the areas of operational logistics, multinational operations, combat and civil

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engineering, and through a working knowledge of the operational environments in the deployment areas.

Moving a battalion or large echelon of personnel overseas, with all of the predeployment training, support requirements, and logistics required, is not a simple feat. Operating in a hostile or austere environment is also challenging, and the preventive medicine and security measures necessary to safeguard the force once there are not intuitively obvious. The value of being "on the ground" in a foreign territory for an extended period cannot be easily duplicated, and such experiences are more useful and practical than any other foreign-area training imaginable. Unit cohesion is also an immediate benefit. The fact that Chinese units are redeploying multiple times to Africa means that a ready force of African operational experts is being built—something the United States does not have.

This last point is very important. PRC troop deployments in support of UN missions such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Sudan are giving Beijing an advantage in operationally deploying to these vastly different and difficult countries. This advantage comprises invaluable knowledge about logistics, ports of debarkation, lines of communication, lines of operations, operational intelligence, local "atmospherics" and modus operandi, and means of sustaining forces in Africa over prolonged periods.

Chinese UN military observers who command at any level of UN peacekeeping operations in Africa (such as the MINURSO colonel we have described) are privy to a unique operational opportunity available to few other non-African officers in the world. This alone is an invaluable operational commodity derived from UN peacekeeping missions in Africa.

The Tactical Value to China of Peacekeeping in Africa

Chinese peacekeepers who serve in Africa on UN missions also enjoy a unique opportunity as well: nothing can replace "boots on the ground" knowledge learned in such missions. Any MINURSO UNMO who has navigated with GPS across thousands of kilometers of desert, talked to local Bedouin, and survived the harsh Sahara and the extremes of desert weather will have a decided advantage in such operational environments, whether in Africa or elsewhere, UN related or not.

Repeated deployments to UN missions in Africa by China will enable the PLA to build an extensive knowledge base. The Chinese major who succeeded me as the Smara team site commander returned to Africa in 2006 for another one-year deployment, this time to Sudan, as a colonel. As far as African expertise goes, he has likely already twice the knowledge base that I possess in all things pertaining to African operational missions.

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Now multiply that advantage by the one thousand personnel whom China is rotating through missions every year in support of UN peacekeeping in Africa. This effort is outpacing Washington's efforts dedicated to operations in Africa by a considerable margin.[66] Conceivably, the United States will one day turn to the Chinese military for help and expertise in missions in Africa.

One unintended consequence of China's substantial participation in UN missions relates to Beijing's stance on sovereignty, as regards intervention in foreign states. It appears that China is slowly being conditioned by the humanitarian efforts in which it has been participating. Whereas China once might have seen UN intervention as a potential threat to its own internal affairs, it now sees the intrinsic value of UN efforts in peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace building and perhaps appreciates more than it once did how interventions can promote regional stability and security.[67]

If so, this means China will continue to support UN peacekeeping efforts globally for the foreseeable future, which would be important to all members of the international community. China's willingness to send significant numbers of personnel eases the strain on others, and its position as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council lends a valuable impetus to peacekeeping in general.

Thus China will continue to send UN peacekeepers worldwide, but it will do so specifically with a keen eye to regions that correspond to its strategic vision. Beijing will continue to view peacekeeping as a valuable security cooperation tool in Africa, and it will take every opportunity to contribute to missions on the continent due to the strategic, operational, and tactical benefit and influence it gains from them. The United States needs to comprehend Beijing's multifaceted and increasingly significant presence in Africa, take account of its contributions to UN peacekeeping operations, and grasp the positive and negative ramifications of this Chinese engagement.

NOTES

This article draws extensively upon research carried out for course work at the Naval War College in 2006 and 2007.

1. Scott Baldauf, "Chinese Leader's Almost Triumphal Trip to Africa," *Christian Science Monitor*, 9 February 2007, available at www.csmonitor.com/.
2. Joshua Eisenman and Joshua Kurlantzick, "China's Africa Strategy," *Current History* (May 2006), p. 219, available at www.afpc.org/china-africa.shtml.
3. Allen Carlson, "Helping to Keep the Peace (Albeit Reluctantly): China's Recent Stance on Sovereignty and Multilateral Intervention," *Pacific Affairs* 77 (Spring 2004), p. 9.
4. Clifford Shelton, "The Energy Component of Africa's Energy Strategy" (lecture, China's Energy Strategy Symposium, China Maritime

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Studies Institute, Naval War College, Newport, R.I., 6 December 2006).

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Michael Elliot, "The Chinese Century," *Time* 169, no. 4 (January 2007), p. 40.

8. Eisenman and Kurlantzick, "China's Africa Strategy," p. 219. China's diplomatic policy is primarily referred to as an "independent foreign policy"—a term Beijing uses to connote independence from American power. It has also been euphemistically called the "strictly business policy" by the Chinese and other nations; other descriptive phrases echo the theme, such as the "business is business" policy or "hands off politics." A less flattering term used to describe China's foreign policy is "oil diplomacy"—which has been used in the past to describe U.S. policy as well.

9. Human Rights Watch, *Sudan: Government Commits "Ethnic Cleansing" in Darfur,* available at hrw.org/english/docs/2004/05/07/darfur8549.htm. Peter Takirambudde, executive director of the Africa Division of Human Rights Watch, states, "There can be no doubt about the Sudanese government's culpability in crimes against humanity in Darfur. The UNSC must not ignore the brutal facts."

10. Anthony Lake and Christine Todd Whitman, *More than Humanitarianism: A Strategic U.S. Approach toward Africa* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2006), p. 43.

11. Human Rights Watch, *The United Nations and Darfur,* available at hrw.org/wr2k5/darfur/3.htm. For example, according to Human Rights Watch, "In the case of Darfur, the main impediment to stronger action by the Security Council has been China, which owns a 40 percent share of Sudan's main oil producing field." At the council's special November 2004 session in Nairobi, China (and possibly Russia, which is thought to be the main arms supplier to the Sudanese government) threatened a veto to pressure other members to water down Resolution 1574. However, as discussed above, it is doubtful that the council would in any case have passed a resolution seriously threatening sanctions against Khartoum.

12. Carlson, "Helping to Keep the Peace (Albeit Reluctantly)," p. 9.

13. Dennis J. Blasko, *The Chinese Army Today: Tradition and Transformation for the 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 178; and Lu Jianxin, "Peacekeeping Operation and Chinese Servicemen," *People's Liberation Army Daily* [hereafter *PLA Daily*], 30 April 2006.

14. United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations [hereafter UN DPKO], *Past Operations,* www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/.

15. UN DPKO, *Facts and Figures,* www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/factsandfigures/.

16. Dennis J. Blasko, "OSD's Assessment of Chinese Military Power: A Dissent" (lecture, Naval War College, Newport, R.I., 18 September 2006).

17. Blasko, *Chinese Army Today,* p. 179.

18. The UN DPKO provides the following definition of UNMO. "United Nations Military Observer: (UNMO or MILOB) Main tasks: to supervise, monitor, verify and report on cease-fire agreements, separations and withdrawals of forces, cessation of outside assistance; to monitor checkpoints, ingress/egress point and sea/airports; to monitor regrouping, cantonment and disarmament or demobilization processes; to locate and confiscate caches of weapons; to liaise with factions, NGOs [nongovernmental organizations], UN agencies and neighboring countries, assist humanitarian activities (POW exchanges, food distribution etc); in some cases UNMOs serve in a Military Observer Group (which consists of UNMOs and is commanded by a Chief Military Observer); in other cases they form part of a peace-keeping force." UN DPKO, *Glossary,* www.un.org/Depts/dpko/glossary/m.htm.

19. Dennis J. Blasko, interview by the author, 18 September 2006; and author's personal experiences.

20. The engineers who deployed to Lebanon in 2006 were selected because of their mine-clearing expertise, acquired through demining the Sino-Vietnamese border over the years. Dennis J. Blasko, personal correspondence with the author.

21. Blasko, *The Chinese Army Today,* p. 180.

22. Although no People's Armed Police (PAP) have deployed on peacekeeping operations, other types of Chinese police have deployed in support of UN missions, acting as UN

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Civilian Police. It is not specifically clear why PAP have not deployed on UN missions to date.

23. *People's Daily Online,* "China to Build Asia's Largest UN Police Training Center," 17 May 2005.

24. Nanjing information provided by Dennis J. Blasko, personal correspondence with the author.

25. Blasko, *Chinese Army Today*, p. 180.

26. Ibid., p. 176.

27. State Council Information Office, People's Republic of China, *White Paper: China's National Defense in 2004* (Beijing: 27 December 2004), p. 32.

28. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: White House, March 2006).

29. *China's Foreign Affairs, 2005* (Beijing: World Affairs, 2005), pp. 359, 422. Several Chinese articles recently have treated peacekeeping operations as one of several nontraditional security issues. For example, the PRC Military's First Symposium on Unconventional Security Theory states that the role of China's armed forces in coping with nontraditional security threats has three aspects: "1) To preserve social stability, to stop and smash subversive and destructive activities, keep the government stable, and protect the nation's long-term political stability; 2) For emergency relief, using the armed forces' advantages in organization and relevant skills to control situations and eliminate dangers, and protect the nation and people's lives and property; and 3) To participate in international peace actions, including international peacekeeping, emergency assistance, fighting transnational crime, and related joint military exercises, so as to make China's rightful contribution to international peace and development."

30. Blasko, *Chinese Army Today*, p. 180.

31. "Remains of Chinese Soldier Cremated in Beijing," *PLA Daily,* 8 July 2007, available at english.chinamil.com.cn/site2/special-reports/2006-08/07/.

32. Another compelling story that has caught the media's and the public's attention is that of two pairs of brothers assigned to the peacekeeping engineer group in Sudan PLA: "Lin Tao is a staff officer of the operation and training section of a group army, Zhang Zhidong is the commander of the 3rd Company of an engineer regiment, and Lin Hao and Zhang Zhiguo are both soldiers of a motor company of the same engineer regiment. When the Peacekeeping Engineer Group to Sudan was to be set up, the two pairs of brothers were quite zealous and immediately submitted their application to the upper levels. However when their parents learned that the living conditions in the peacekeeping areas there were very hard and the mission was very dangerous, they strongly opposed their children's decision. In order to persuade their parents, these two pairs of brothers phoned their parents and wrote to them many times. In a letter to his parents, Zhang Zhiguo wrote: 'You sent me and my brother to join the army because you expected we could be useful persons to our country. To join the peacekeeping mission is the best chance for us to requite our country with our practical action. To step forward bravely when the country needs us most is not only our unshirkable obligation, but also extremely honorable to you.' Eventually, their parents were moved by their determination to requite the country. They not only agreed with their request to join in the peacemaking group to Sudan, but also called or wrote to them many times to encourage them not to be distracted by their families and make sure to complete the peacemaking mission with flying colors." *PLA Daily,* 8 July 2006.

33. *China's Foreign Affairs, 2005*, p. 422.

34. "China's African Policy: A White Paper," *PLA Daily*, 12 January 2006, pp. 2, 9, available at english.chinamil.com.cn/.

35. UN DPKO, *Past Operations,* www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/.

36. UN DPKO, *UNOCI: Facts and Figures,* www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unoci/facts.html.

37. UN DPKO, *MONUC: Facts and Figures,* www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/monuc/facts.html.

38. "Peacekeeping Force Sets Out for Congo," *PLA Daily,* 8 July 2007, available at english.chinamil.com.cn/site2/special-reports/2006-08/07/.

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39. UN DPKO, *UNMEE: Facts and Figures,* www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmee/facts.html.
40. UN DPKO, *UNMIL: Facts and Figures,* www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmil/facts.html.
41. "First Batch of Peacekeeping Troops Back from Liberia," *PLA Daily,* available at english.chinamil.com.cn.
42. "Yearender: Chinese Peacekeepers Make Greater Contribution to World Peace," *PLA Daily.*
43. UN DPKO, *UNMIS: Facts and Figures,* www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmis/facts.html.
44. "Chinese Peace-keeping Force Formed for Sudan Mission," *PLA Daily,* 9 September 2005, available at english.chinamil.com.cn.
45. United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone, *UNIOSIL: Facts and Figures,* www.uniosil.org/.
46. UN DPKO, *MINURSO: Facts and Figures,* www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minurso/facts.html.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Author's personal experiences.
50. Todd D. Moore (student, Naval War College, MINURSO UNMO, 2000–2001), interview by the author, 12 October 2006.
51. Author's personal experiences.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Moore interview.
56. Todd D. Ryder (student, Naval War College, MINURSO UNMO, 1997–98) interview by the author, 10 October 2006.
57. Author's personal experiences.
58. Ibid.
59. UN DPKO, *Peacekeeping: Questions and Answers,* www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/faq/q9.htm.
60. Ibid.
61. Author's personal experiences.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. "UN Selects Chinese Riot Police for Peacekeeping Mission," *PLA Daily,* english.chinamil.com.cn.
65. Eisenman and Kurlantzick, "China's Africa Strategy," p. 221.
66. The noticeable exception to this is U.S. involvement in the Horn of Africa. The Chinese are developing considerable influence in the region, but American military operational experience outpaces their efforts at present.
67. Carlson, "Helping to Keep the Peace (Albeit Reluctantly)," p. 16.

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